

Timber Harvest Review Component

California Department of Fish and Game Northern California - North Coast Region Interior Timberland Planning Team

Leadperson

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Abstract

The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) is required by the California Forest Practice Act and California Forest Practice Rules to participate in the review of timber harvesting plans^a (THPs) (Title 14 California Code of Regulations [CCR] Section 1037.5, Public Resources Code Section 4582.6). The DFG also has trustee authority for the protection of fish and wildlife resources (Fish and Game Code Section 711.7 and 1802, CCR Section 15386) and the authority for the protection of species listed under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish and Game Code sections 2050 et seq., Public Resources Code Section 21104.2). The purpose of DFG's review is to identify and evaluate biological resources at risk and recommend mitigation that reduces these risks to a level that is less than significant.

The primary issues, resources, or hazards to resources that the Interior Timberland Planning Team (Team) has concerns with that may be addressed through the timber harvest review process include:

- Early and late-seral habitat elements
- Hardwoods
- Terrestrial habitat and vegetation diversity
- Watercourse classification
- Aquatic sedimentation
- Water temperature
- Aquatic habitat structure
- Water quantity
- Special status species

Regulations that address timeframes, function, and procedures regarding the DFG's participation in the review process are contained in the California Forest Practice Act

^a As used in this document, the terms "timber harvesting plan" and "THP" refer not only to timber harvesting plans but to other harvest-related documents including nonindustrial timber management plans, modified THPs, and program timber harvesting plans.

and California Forest Practice Rules. The Team has developed internal processes, goals, and strategies for operating within these statutes and regulations that are guided and constrained by availability of staff, legislated requirements, and goals and objectives of the Team. The following describes the goal, objectives, framework, strategies, and methods which the Team uses to conduct timber harvest review.

Goal

- Promote the conservation of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitats necessary for sustainable populations of these resources through timber harvest review

Objectives

- Meet legislated review requirements of the Headwaters North Coast Enforcement budget change proposal
 - Desk review all projects
 - Provide CESA and Board of Forestry Sensitive Species consultations for all projects where required
 - Intensive review of 25% of THPs in Trinity and Siskiyou counties
 - Conduct post-harvest monitoring of 25% of THPs in Trinity and Siskiyou counties
- Prioritize other projects for review and address site specific resource risks as staff time allows
- Recommend mitigation to address potential significant adverse effects to fish, wildlife and botanical resources at the project level
- Support landscape planning efforts
 - Provide incentives to address resource protection on a programmatic basis when possible
- Build and maintain good working relationships with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF), other review agencies, foresters, consultants, and timber companies
- Comply with the regulatory review requirements of the FPRs (CCR Section 1037) and agreed upon procedures with CDF ("Review Procedures")

Strategic Plan

The Team consists of one supervisor, seven full time Environmental Scientists (ES) and one scientific aide. Several of these positions were created from the North Coast Enforcement budget change proposal in 1999. One ES is the leadperson for conducting and coordinating first review and communication and cooperation between the Team and CDF. Other staff assists in first review as needed. Another ES is leadperson for landscape planning efforts (see Timberland Planning Component). Consultations are conducted by several ES's assigned to individual species. One ES is assigned to monitoring and other staff participates as needed. The scientific aide assists with first review and handles data entry, filing, and other duties as required. Team staff have a diversity of training, experience and expertise in the fields of wildlife,

aquatic science, fisheries, botany, ecology, and forestry.

The formal review process for THPs (authority, Review Team agencies and responsibilities, time-lines, etc.) is detailed in the California Forest Practice Act and California Forest Practice Rules. The specific process followed by the DFG when reviewing THPs for potential impacts to biological resources is outlined in the draft Timber Harvest Review Manual. A brief summary of the review process used by the Team follows.

Team staff obtain all correspondence at CDF twice per week to insure timely transfer of information and ability to respond. Timber harvest documents filed during a week are scheduled for first review the following Tuesday. Desk review occurs for all timber harvest documents and correspondence, and consists of screening for potential impacts to biological resources and subsequent prioritization for further action. To do this, the Team uses databases and geographic information systems (Enquery, California Natural Diversity Database, DFG Special Plants List, etc.) to determine if any CESA listed, Board of Forestry Sensitive, DFG Special Plant, or other special status species (collectively "special status species") are currently or recently known to occur in the general vicinity of the project. The habitat and biological information provided in the plan are assessed, and depending on the information in the plan and the nature of the resources potentially at risk, Team staff may 1) pose First Review questions, 2) request to attend the pre-harvest inspection (PHI), or 3) do nothing further. First review questions and comments are the Teams first opportunity to request additional information, suggest mitigation or alternatives, or request further opportunity for review and attendance on the pre-harvest inspection (PHI).

The prioritization of staff review time is as follows:

- 1) CESA and Board of Forestry Sensitive Species consultations
Desk review of all projects
Intensive review of 25% of Siskiyou and Trinity county THPs
Monitoring of 25% of Siskiyou and Trinity county THPs
- 2) Intensive review of Nonindustrial Timber Management Plans
Intensive review of other landscape documents (Sustained Yield Plans, Option A THPs, Habitat Conservation Plans, programmatic agreements)
- 3) Intensive review of other projects (plans in Shasta, Tehama, Modoc, and Lassen counties; major and minor amendments; emergency notices; exemptions; conversions)

Intensive review of a harvest document usually consists of the following: an in-depth analysis of the potential hazards and risks to biological resources; attendance on the PHI; preparation of a written report to CDF including recommendations; preparation of follow-up correspondence; and attendance at second review meetings. Intensive review is conducted by one or more of the ES's depending upon the resources at risk and availability of staff time. Intensive review may or may not address all resources at risk, but may focus on the resource identified by staff as the most at risk from the

proposed project. Team members have developed modules that outline the Team's approach to specific resource protection within the timber harvest review process (see Attachment 1).

A PHI will be scheduled at the earliest time available to all parties attending. All known concerns or recommendations that may be included in the PHI report are voiced at the PHI. Any correspondence or discussions between the Team and the Registered Professional Forester or plan submitter are transmitted to CDF. The Team strives to get PHI reports submitted within mandated review time-frames. Extensions requested under PRC 4586.2(b) are only requested as necessary and are kept to a minimum. Communication with CDF and the plan submitter may consist of memorandums signed by the Team's Regional Manager, email, telephone, or meetings in person. For the public record, Team communications that consist of concurrence are usually contained in an email, whereas communications that consist of recommendations, contentious issues, or substantial evidence are usually contained in a memorandum. Second review meetings are only conducted if there are un-resolved issues, or if requested by any party.

Coordination with CDF is accomplished through several means including: attendance at quarterly "Roundtable" meetings; informal communications; review and updating standardized "Review Procedures" (as partially described above); identification of a leadperson for all plans that the Team comments on; designation of one ES as the lead for coordination and communication with CDF. Roundtable meetings are held to discuss any issue pertinent to the review process, and includes staff from all the review team agencies. The Review Procedures are agreed upon methods within statute and regulation requirements that reduce mis-communications and increase coordination between CDF and the Team. Designation of a lead ES for the review process and a leadperson for each plan assists in reducing excess confusion and communications within the Team and also with CDF and review team agencies.

A major goal of the Team is to build and maintain good working relationships with CDF, other review team agencies, foresters, consultants, and timber companies. This will be done through:

- Honest communication
- Timely response
- No surprises
- Recognizing resource protection and stewardship
- Finding innovative solutions
- Remaining ethical and fair
- Basing recommendations upon sound science and best available information
- Acknowledging scientific uncertainty

The review of harvest documents should compliment and support landscape planning activities. Most issues originate in a specific area or THP, but may be relevant on a broader scale. The Team is interested in addressing resource issues on a landscape

scale, and will strive to initiate resource protection and problem solving in this arena as reoccurring issues arise within timber harvest review.

Monitoring

Monitoring of timber harvest activities is a major component of the Team's success. Monitoring will identify problems with implementation, verify the effectiveness of recommendations, and support landscape planning efforts. The Headwaters North Coast Enforcement budget change proposal set a monitoring requirement at 25% of the THPs in Siskiyou and Trinity counties. Monitoring of other harvest activities will take place beyond this and may include monitoring other counties, landscape efforts, consultations, or specific mitigations. The specific processes and procedures are currently being developed by the Team.

Adaptive Management

Adaptive management is important to the long-term effectiveness of the Team. Review priorities, habitats, sensitive species, landscape issues, legislated mandates, and procedures change with time, and the long-term success of the Team will depend on re-evaluating processes and priorities to more effectively protect and conserve resources.

Measures of Success

Success will be measured by the extent to which the following are met:

- Legislated review requirements for Siskiyou and Trinity counties are met or exceeded
- Review time-frames and "Review Procedures" are complied with
- Resource impacts are mitigated to a level less than significant
- Good working relationships are built and maintained with CDF, other review agencies, foresters, and companies
- The Team's landscape planning efforts are initiated and supported

Attachment 1

List of Modules and Leadperson Identified

Timber Harvest Review

Terrestrial Review Module – Brett Furnas

Roads + Crossings Review Module – Curt Babcock

Watercourse Class Module – Jennifer Bull

Sensitive Plant Review Module – Pete Figura

Goshawk Review Module – Brett Furnas

Greater Sandhill Crane Review Module – Joe Hobbs

Willow Flycatcher Review Module – Joe Hobbs